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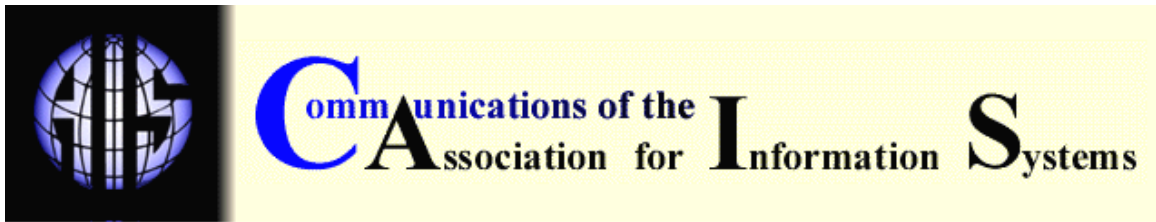
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AIS PRESIDENT'S REPORT: 2002-2003

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ABSTRACT

It is customary for the outgoing President of AIS to publish a report in CAIS on the activities during his or her tenure and on future directions for the organization. This is such a report.

On becoming President I was fortunate in finding an organization in good shape thanks to the excellent work of my predecessors. Consequently, AIS faced no immediate crises and it was possible to focus on some longer term issues such as attaining global reach for the organization, increasing member involvement, transparency, and the state of the discipline. One crisis that did arise concerned AACSB curriculum standards; this crisis was successfully solved thanks to the rapid and dedicated reaction of a number of members.

The longer term issues mentioned, together with the need to constantly enhance service to members, will probably continue to occupy the AIS leadership.

KEYWORDS: AIS, globalization, member involvement, state of the IS discipline, transparency

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a tradition that the outgoing President of AIS submit an article to the *Communications of AIS* describing the state of the organization and suggesting objectives for the future. The previous reports, which present an encouraging picture of the development of AIS under its previous presidents were by Gordon Davis[1999], Blake Ives [2001], and Michael Vitale [2002]. My own term as President of AIS came to an end on May 1. This article is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the state of AIS.

But first I would like to extend the warmest possible welcome to my successor – Kwok Kee Wei. KK is the first President of AIS from the Asian continent and this augurs well for the continuing globalization of AIS, of which more later. I have known KK for a number of years and am sure that he will have an extremely successful tenure as President.

I also want to thank all those who made my own tenure a pleasurable and satisfying experience. They are far too many to mention all personally, and rather than forgetting any who deserve recognition, I will recognize groups rather than individuals. They include the headquarters staff and a very large number of members who devoted their time to serve on Council, as members of committees, and as members of task forces such as that which addressed the problem of the AACSB guidelines.

Fortunately, the organization I found on entering my tenure was built on solid foundations by my predecessors in office. The organization grew steadily and recently passed the 3200 member mark.

Those directions in which I thought AIS should continue to move most vigorously were growth, globalization, transparency, and attempting to promote the status of the IS field.

II. GLOBALIZATION

The goals of growth and establishing a global presence are deeply intertwined. Growth is also heavily dependent on member involvement, on which more later. The need for a more balanced global presence becomes immediately obvious on examining the origins of the membership; about 60 percent are from the Americas, and the overwhelming majority of those are from North America, about 30% are from Region 2 - Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and only about 10 percent are from Region 3 – Pacific Asia – and the vast majority of those are from Australasia. Thus, there is considerable potential for growth in Regions 2 and 3. Such growth would also help to redress the global imbalance. Some of the problems of global imbalance certainly arise from specific characteristics of the field in different countries. For example, the distinction between IS and Computer Science is more or less blurred in different parts of the world. The proportions of IS academics differ from country to country, and language problems almost certainly play a role.

But it transpires that we know little about the nature of IS in different regions. At least one initiative is in place in each region to try to ameliorate this problem. In Region 1 there is an outreach program to Latin America, the most notable outcome of which is the scheduling of AMCIS in Mexico in 2006. In Region 2 a survey of IS in East Africa and in Region 3 a survey of IS in Pacific Asia are being funded. The development of AIS in those parts of regions in which it is less developed became an important function of the regional representatives on Council. Hopefully, a better understanding of the nature of IS in these regions will enable closer ties. In the same vein, there is an ongoing effort to establish closer ties with ECIS and PACIS, the regional conferences.

III. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

An important aspect of the growth of AIS is the active involvement of members in its activities. Until recently, standing for office and filling elected positions was one of the few avenues for such activity. In recent years, however, the addition of Chapters and Special Interest Groups provided broad additional possibilities for further active participation. Encouragingly, the number of new Chapters and Special Interest Groups continues to grow rapidly. During the last year, a chapter was established in Australasia and affiliation agreements were signed with GI/FB5 - the IS section of the German-Speaking Information Systems Societies - and with AIM, the French National IS Society. Activities are ongoing to found a number of additional chapters and several of these should come to fruition soon. An impressive twelve Special Interest Groups are already established to date, three in the last year - SIGED-IAIM, SIGLead and SIGPhilosophy. This growth is encouraging evidence of the involvement of the members in the activities of AIS.

IV. TRANSPARENCY

A third major issue is the establishment of transparency in the functioning of the organization. It is natural that the charter of a young organization leaves open many issues that need later to be

better defined. Such issues are usually addressed when particular problems arise, a solution is found, and the appropriate process becomes incorporated into the By-Laws. A number of such issues arose over the past year and led to development of AIS procedures in the direction of greater transparency. Some examples follow.

The organization encountered its first plagiarism problems. These incidents led to the formation of a committee that defined procedures for handling member misconduct and a standing committee to implement those procedures. Hopefully, this committee will find little to exercise it, but it made a valuable contribution in the form of drafts of a Code of Ethics for members and of procedures for handling member misconduct.

Another example is the need to replace Council officers occasionally in mid term. The By-Laws stated that the replacement is to be appointed by Council. However, the By-Laws did not define how such an appointment is to be made. A first decision was to announce the availability of such positions and to invite applications. This was done recently for the positions of Treasurer, Secretary, and VP Publications. Furthermore, it was necessary to devise a procedure to enable Council to choose among the applicants. This procedure was formalized and will be included in the By-Laws.

Perhaps most important in terms of transparency has been the development of the financial statements. In particular, formulation of an organization-wide budget permitted a marked improvement in financial control. The activities in this direction were initiated by my predecessors and made possible the presentation of the first organization-wide budget in 2002 and subsequent presentation of quarterly financial statements. At its recent meeting, Council decided to request the Treasurer to prepare budgets for four years in advance. As AIS attempts to increase and improve its services to members, up to but within the limitations imposed by available resources, the availability of accurate financial control tools becomes ever more important.

V. STATE OF THE IS DISCIPLINE

It will not come as a surprise to the reader that the IS field is in almost a permanent state of anxiety. Some of our colleagues find it difficult to convince their schools that IS should be part of the core curriculum in Business. The most important manifestation of this problem was circulation of the draft AACSB Quality Standards for Business Curricula. This first draft contained no mention of IS/IT. The rapid and excellent work of a group of AIS members led to formulation of recommendations to The AACSB Blue Ribbon Committee which was defining the standards. The Blue Ribbon Committee was receptive of these recommendations. As a result, the final Quality Standards, recently adopted, by AACSB contain a number of references to IS/IT.

As a result of this exercise and of the general malaise in the field, a meeting of some twenty-five of the most senior people in the field was convened at the ICIS conference in Barcelona to discuss the nature of the field. Not surprisingly, some quite different points of view were aired, but these led to some understanding of the issues. As a result of this meeting, a Blue Ribbon Panel has been appointed with the goal of defining the nature of the IS discipline in the hope of finding a common ground for the various approaches. It is hoped that this activity will also help promote the status of Information Systems as an academic discipline.

VI. SUMMARY

In summary, this year was most rewarding for me. It was one in which AIS continued to develop both as an organization and as a leader and speaker for the Information Systems field. I believe that the issues I discussed here will continue to be major preoccupations of the leadership of AIS, together with the abiding need to constantly enhance the services offered to members. The current President, KK Wei indicated in his first letter to the membership that he shares these beliefs. I have no doubt that he and the President-Elect, Rick Watson, will continue the work of strengthening and improving our organization.

Editor's Note: This article was received on July 20, 2003 and was published on July 31, 2003.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

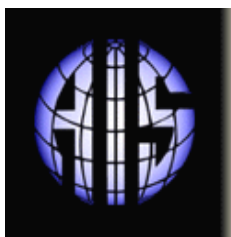
Phillip Ein-Dor received his Ph.D. degree in Industrial Administration from Carnegie-Mellon University (1971). He is currently Professor Emeritus and Chair of New Economy Information Systems at the Faculty of Management, Tel-Aviv University.

His research interests include theory of information systems, natural language processing, information technology and infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and the Internet. Over the past three decades, Dr. Ein-Dor published about 50 research papers and wrote or edited four books in his fields of interest.

Ein-Dor is the founding editor of the *Journal of AIS* and served on the editorial board of *MIS Quarterly*. He currently serves on the editorial or advisory boards of various IS journals.

For AIS, he served as council member as well as in the organizing, nominating, and publications committees. In 2000 was honored as an AIS Fellow. In 2001 he was elected President-Elect of AIS, served as President in 2002-2003, and is current Past-President.

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